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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 003836

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SOMALIA TFG SPEAKER  
SHARIF HASSAN SHEIKH ADEN AUGUST 30

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger per 1.5 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the Ambassador August 30, the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) Speaker of Parliament gave his view of the current situation in Somalia, emphasized the need for American involvement and "neutral" troops, and described his planned approach to anyone in the Islamic Courts who may want to join the Transitional government. His expectations for the current round of negotiations appear modest at best. The Ambassador reviewed U.S. policy and USG interest in meeting with the UIC,s Sheikh Sharif in order to deliver a clear message of U.S. expectations. The speaker welcomed this and offered to help facilitate such a meeting. He has been invited to Washington for an NDI program, probably around September ¶16. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Somali (TFG) Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden came to the Ambassador's residence for a Breakfast discussion the morning of August 30 before the Speaker flew to Khartoum. The Speaker was accompanied by two MPs, one of whom interpreted. Also present were A/DCM and A/Polcouns (notetaker).

Speaker's Views of Somalia Today  
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¶3. (C) The Ambassador opened the meeting by laying out U.S. views, based on previously received guidance from Washington. He emphasized U.S. interest in working closely with the TFG. He explained U.S. desire to encourage moderates within the UIC to assert themselves and to encourage the UIC to pursue a constructive dialogue with the TFG with a view to ensuring an inclusive, viable government. The Ambassador touched, in general terms, on the message he intends to deliver when he meets with Sheikh Sharif. The Speaker described Somalia today as "chaotic" and "in very bad shape." He sees three forces in Mogadishu now: nationalists, Islamists, and veterans of earlier wars. The moderates and a "very small group" of extremists have different policy goals, but for now have the "the same interests." Those interests are to become a government and to oppose foreign intervention, particularly from Ethiopia. Not long ago, the individuals now aligned with the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) were incredibly weak militarily, with only five "technicals." But when they won the people to their side, they were able to defeat the warlords and seize their weapons. Having opened the port and airport, they now have increased access to funding as well. They tell

the people that the government (the TFG) wants to bring in the hated Ethiopians ("who fought two wars against us, in 1963 and 1977") to "destroy us." In response to the Ambassador's question about dynamics within the TFG, Hassan said that "now it is me and the President and the rest against the Prime Minister."

Ethiopia No, Neutral and American Involvement, Yes  
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¶4. (C) The Speaker said he had always been against the presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia, because it could lead to various war scenarios, one of which might be a proxy war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. "We don't need to be the nail between the (Ethiopian) hammer and the (Eritrean) table." Hassan said he had not seen Ethiopian troops in Somalia, but "people tell me they are there." Ethiopian intervention is counter-productive, Hassan emphasized. He stressed that "America needs to be involved now," and should not have a "wait-and-see" attitude. The Somali people want American diplomatic intervention, he claimed. If the international community doesn't act quickly, "we (i.e. the TFG) will be gone." Hassan said that "neutral" troops are needed to secure the airport, port, and presidency in Mogadishu, and to "re-establish" a Somali military. Hassan said that IGAD forces would be seen as a proxy for Ethiopia. Once there is a stable government, the people themselves will turn over the Embassy bombers "that the U.S. says are in Mogadishu."

Getting the UIC Into the TFG  
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¶5. (C) Admitting that initial hopes for the Khartoum talks are not high, the Speaker said he was going to "open the dialogue," not to come up with final positions. Some elements of the UIC don't want to be in the TFG, but it might be possible to persuade some to join. The Ambassador asked what Sharif Hassan would say to moderates. We will say "you did a good job on security, but we have legitimacy with the international community. Why not join us? In three years, there will be elections, and you can contest them." If they accept, then the TFG can discuss what positions they want, the Speaker said. Though the Ambassador sought to draw out Hassan on the possible formulas for a deal, he would go no further.

Complications: Clan Formulas, the Arab League?  
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¶6. (C) The Ambassador asked if the Charter (the Transitional Federal Charter of the Somali Republic, the foundational document of the TFIs) was open to amendment if that was the demand. The Speaker replied that the Charter could be amended, with Parliament's approval. However, "what we really fear is that they will completely reject the Charter," including the "4 point 5" formula for clan power-sharing. The UIC leaders are "really all from the Hawiye clan," so if they demand seats in parliament or the government, it would endanger the formula anyway. Asked by the Ambassador if the Arab League is playing a positive role, the Speaker replied that he was unaware of anything negative about the League's role. However, the Arabs are being cautious, he said.

Moderates  
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¶7. (C) Asked to identify moderates within the UIC, Sharif Hassan was hesitant. Apart from talking with Sheikh Sharif, Hassan urged the U.S. to reach out to businessmen and intellectuals, but he did not have specific names. The U.S. and TFG strategy, he emphasized, must be to isolate extremists within the UIC by appealing to the Somali public

and by pushing Ethiopia and Eritrea to stay out of Somalia, so as not to provide a unifying point on which extremists can capitalize. He noted that the TFG has no media means (particularly radio) for contact with the Somali people. Hassan named Yusuf Inde Adde as another moderate, saying he is from the Lower Shabelle area, controls Merka, and is the UIC security chief. Toward the end of the meeting, he suggested the UIC head of delegation in Khartoum and "Foreign Minister," Ibrahim Hassan Addo. The latter is U.S. educated, and spent years there, the Speaker said. Sharif Hassan said that he would try to get back to the Ambassador with names of other moderates.

Comment

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18. (C) The Speaker welcomed increased contact with the Ambassador and USG interlocutors, and indicated he would welcome meetings in Washington in connection with his planned September visit. His unwillingness to discuss potential detailed formulas for UIC-TFG accommodation likely reflects divisions within the TFG (as separate reporting has indicated) regarding parameters for power-sharing. It is clear that he sees the Khartoum talks as a means of maintaining official dialogue, but has little expectation that those talks will yield a solution on the way forward. Hassan offered to help facilitate a meeting with Sheikh Sharif, if needed. The Ambassador took note of the offer. In an interesting bio note, Hassan said that he was the Catholic Relief Services representative in Somalia in 1994.  
RANNEBERGER